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## The Decorator and Furnisher

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OUR readers in general will be much interested in the schemes of decoration given under the heading of Answers to Correspondents. We give absolutely correct combinations of color harmony which can be carried out in materials which are within reach of the most modest purse, and our recommendations in each case are worth from \$50 to \$100 for the information alone.

IT will be noticed that we do not attempt to confuse our correspondents with elaborate decorative methods in the shape of wall papers, draperies, and carpets covered with interminable scrolls, flower effects, etc., which are of less value from an artistic standpoint than surfaces in plain color relieved only by the textures of the various materials. We prefer as a rule to get the color scheme right, and then our correspondents, if they choose, can indulge in patterns, if the conventional method of decoration has too strong a hold upon them.

AFTER all, an apartment should be an abode of rest, and soothe the occupant with its placid surfaces of soft and inviting color. Those whose aims in life are not to possess restful homes, pure and simple, but who desire to become shining lights in society, and who aim at astounding and impressing their friends with an idea of their financial position, will, of course, demand more pretentious effects than we feel justified as a general rule in recommending. As coin and securities of various kinds cannot well be placed on exhibition, the desire to display one's wealth will naturally indulge in costly and elaborate houses which have their due weight on the human mind as ordinary constituted.

SOCIETY is, to a large extent, here as elsewhere simply a display of wealth, the winning cards being the most costly household appointments. Hence the individuality, the unexpectedness of the colorings, the lavishly carved and gilt framework of the attractive and accomplished mode created by the modern luxury; hence the altogether brilliant and ultra-magnificent display of onyx tables and lamps, and the fine line of small card and fancy tables inlaid with marquetry, and the novel and graceful designs that are embraced in the many new suites of carved gilt and inlaid mahogany furniture originated for the trade each recurring season.

**A** PIANO CASE, which is being made at New York to be sent to England, shows the great beauty of the recently obtained camino wood for such uses. The adornment of a painted border in green foliage with center design of graceful arrangement is finely suited with the golden, creamy tone of the wood in its wavy figuring. This costly material is seen mainly in the form of veneers, except in cases where such application could not well be made, as in chair arms with curving outlines. Its importation from South America is in limited quantity, allowing as yet of only a few pieces of furniture being produced from it, although these are sufficient to show the superb character of the style. In the use of ornament with this material, in forms of borders and medallions, the blending is found finer than with satin wood. This is shown to advantage in a dressing table of daintily elaborate ornamentation, and in one of larger size with heart-shaped mirror decorated in similar manner. Some small tables in this veneering with bands of painted ornament, and a variety of chairs, are fine, graceful pieces favorably introducing the wood.

**W**ITH all our enthusiasm for the "latest novelties" in decorative art materials there is a solid merit in many of the old time furnishings that should not be overlooked in our interesting age. The end and aim of decoration is, or ought to be, rest, that is ease first and fashion afterward. The English royal yachts *Victoria* and *Albert* and the *Osborne* are old-time side-wheelers of about 2,500 tons, built about forty years ago, but still serviceable, comfortable and convenient, without any display of luxury or magnificence. But there is a rare combination of simplicity and good taste everywhere prevailing. The decks are covered with linoleum, over which carpeting is laid when royalty takes passage on board. They have pretty little 5 o'clock tea cabins on deck, and are lighted electrically throughout. All the royal apartments on board the *Victoria* and *Albert* have the floors covered with red and black Brussels carpet, in small coral patterns, the walls hung with rosebud chintz, box plaited; the doors of bird's eye maple, with handles of iron and fittings heavily electroplated. The Queen's bedroom has a brass bedstead screwed into sockets in the floor; bed furniture of rosebud chintz lined with green silk, canopy to match, green silk blinds and plain white muslin curtains, with gauffered frills, mahogany furniture, chintz covered. Dressing room, mahogany furniture covered with green leather, writing and dressing table combined, the walls covered with maps and charts on spring rollers. All of these are kept in exactly the same state they were when the Prince Consort was alive, as the Queen forbids any change being made. Whenever she has to sleep a night on board the yacht she takes her mattress with her, and she is unable to sleep on any other.

**T**HE poster show, at present being held at Buffalo, contains a number of American posters which compare favorably with the French. The work on them is quite as artistic as that of the French lithographer, but the designer has not the ingenuity or the impudence of Cheret. He does not dare to be as gay as he would like to be, perhaps. The Roman Chariot Race, and the Hotstuff Bill are quite as fine as anything. Posters in a room are even more stunning than when viewed on fences and walls, and the hoardings of to-day take the place of the facades of mediæval houses, which were enlivened by the figures of the patron saints of the craftsmen who dwelt therein.

Turning from the large posters to the small ones, used to advertise magazines, books and picture exhibitions, we are in a new department altogether. It is scarcely more than a year since the Harpers began to use these posters, and they are among the most catchy bills anywhere exhibited, more attractive even than Grasset's Napoleon. The Bradley designs in imitation of Beardsley are inferior, because they are virtually meaningless—as meaningless as the gargoyles under the eaves of a house. Beardsley, who is a large-featured, low-browed young man, wearing a bang, has had a picture made of himself, with his head thrust forward, after the manner of a gruesome gargoyle, as a fit emblem of the rôle he plays in pictorial art. Comparing the work of an artist like Grasset with that of a faddist like Beardsley we are confronted with the two poles of poster designing, namely, the sublime and the ridiculous.

What painter or genius has not been and will not ever be glad to thus openly display his work to the passer-by, delighted to behold his novel idea, his bold design, his brilliant color, resplendent in the sunshine of high noon?

Thus does modern art address itself, like the epic of old, to the crowded market place.

**A** MORE wonderful natural product than that known as agatised wood seldom is put to decorative use. From being limited in quantity to a few trees, this extraordinary material of Chalcedony Park, Arizona, is precious. A horizontal section of one of these stony trunks, of an average thickness of an inch, with peculiarly beautiful development in variegated color, has been purchased in New York for \$100 to be a top for a table, of which the support is iron beautifully wrought. The support is arranged necessarily to fit the formation of a slab with one of its sides about double the thickness of the other, since no nearer approach to evenness is attained from the operation of marble saws with this hard substance. A great amount of money has been expended to overcome the adamantine quality of the stone, and the problem of working it successfully is by no means solved. The petrified material is not only almost invulnerable to mechanical forces, but its density is that of stone. With a diameter of sixteen and a half inches the table top piece, with the thickness already stated, weighs no less than twenty-eight pounds. This is simply cold gray stone on the under side. The upper surface smoothed and polished is of exquisitely intricate color. The bark section, with irregularities of circumference which will be retained in the piece of furniture, is dark grape purple. The surface otherwise is swept with waves and streaks and fantastic forms in which red, in many variations, from faint pink to a deep blood hue, predominates, with mingled blue, gray, bronze and smoke, and with clustered silver grains and network of gold and scintillant points as from scarce visible diamonds. A winding fissure in the old wood is filled up in this fairy mosaic with shining blue like a rivulet. The whole surface is mirror-like, reflecting every object within range. In a group of interesting specimens within a window at Union Square every floating cloud in the sky above is seen reflected.

**I**T is the execution and not the proposition of a theme that determines its art value. The importance of the result depends upon the artist's sensitiveness to the facts supplied to him, upon the use of his hereditary and acquired methods of recording them, and upon his personal variation of those methods. It is this apparent want of comprehension of the first principles of the plastic art in our modern work that makes one a pessimist as to our near future. We value material or the body instead of workmanship, or the right use of the body. To us gold seems more precious than wood, whereas to the true artist the wood and gold are nothing but the means to an end. Our artists too often do not look to the end, but to the means, while to the true artist the means are the mere vehicle of the idea—as with the Greeks their work will live even if its very physical existence is obliterated, because it is built in the mind, in the eternity of thought. It is the principle of the proper place of means that makes the little piece of Japanese metal work—for instance, the sword guard or the knife handle, an epitome of art, certainly a greater work of art than any modern cathedral. The artist may use gold or silver, or lead or lacquer, or the cutting and filing of steel, or ivory or mother of pearl; and these he will model, chisel, sink or emboss, as the story needs, and do it coarsely or loosely, or minutely or delicately, as the unity of his little world requires. And he will work in a hurry, or work slowly; he will varnish it, rub it down and polish it again, and bake it many times, and let it weather out of doors, or hide it carefully away, or bathe it in acids or salts, and all this for days and months in the year; and when he has finished, he has given me, besides the excellency that we call workmanship—which he must give me because that is the bargain between us—he has given me his desires, his memories, his pleasures, his dreams, all the little occurrences of so much life. He has followed the law of *Tao*, so that however humble his little world, it has a life of its own which cannot be separated from its material; no picture of it; no reproduction will give its full charms, any more than a photograph will give that of a human being.